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Exhibitions at New York Galleries

By Special Correspondent

ONE of the events of the month past which will not soon be forgotten was the Lambert sale, and the most striking incident thereof was the price received for Ralph Blakelock's painting entitled "Moonlight." This famous canvas, one of the best by this child of misfortune, brought \$20,000 and will find a permanent home in the Toledo Art Museum. There is something unjust about the fact that the artist and his family are still in misery and poverty when the work to which he gave all that was in him is bringing such fabulous prices.

Following the Lambert sale comes the great sensation of the purchase of an important Gainsborough, "The Mall, St. James's Park," by Duveen Brothers for an American client.

Speculation whispers the names Frick and Widener as being among the most likely purchasers. The picture was, until recently, the property of Sir William Agnew, who had purchased it but a little time since from Sir Audley Dallas Neeld, in whose country manor at Grittleton, Chippenham, Wiltshire, it had hung for many years. It is estimated that the price paid by Duveens may well have ranged between a quarter and a half million. Concerning this picture, the critic of the *New York Tribune* says:

"The huge sums paid for old masters have sometimes invited rather sharply critical comment. But like Artemus Ward, who did not care how many of his wife's relations were drafted into the war, we do not care how much has been paid for Gainsborough's 'View in the Mall, St. James's Park,' the picture just

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acquired for an American collector, according to recent dispatches. It is said that a portentous price was paid to the owner, Sir Audley Neeld. It does not matter. If one of the two most likely buyers, Mr. Frick or Mr. Widener, has paid half a million for it, we can only congratulate him on his bargain. Why? Because 'The Mall' is reckoned amongst those paintings which add appreciably to the joy of life. Other masterpieces may be worth having for other reasons. This one is renowned merely as a boon of beauty. It measures about four feet by three and every square inch of it is drenched in the radiance of romantic landscape art. Gainsborough never painted a lovelier thing.

"It is a souvenir of his old age, painted, it is believed, only two years or so before his death, but it more properly represents the very springtide of his art. Sir Walter Armstrong, his definitive biographer, cites a delightful saying of Walpole's about the picture—'it is all in motion and in a flutter like a lady's fan.' Constable, a sure judge of a landscape if ever there was one, is credited with a sedate observation, 'An exceeding fine picture.' But the famous dilettante struck the apter, more dithyrambic note. In doing so he recognized the peculiar element in Gainsborough's genius, the element which set him apart from all the other painters of his school.

"As the tradition of Van Dyck filtered down into eighteenth century English art it promoted in the first place a certain courtly formalism. The stately portraiture characteristic of the Georgian masters is distinguished above all things by elegance of design. In Sir Joshua's hands it takes on something of the grand style, and, indeed, this tendency is perceptible in all the members of his circle, in Gainsborough as in the rest. But the painter of 'The Mall' had some curiously modern streaks in him. Like Ruysdael before him, like Constable and the Barbizon men, he had a profound feeling for nature. Where Reynolds would use landscape only for background purposes, choosing his motive from some majestic English park, Gainsborough would paint it for its own sake and go to the countryside for his theme. Then, too, like Velasquez and Rubens before him, like Manet and Alfred Stevens and a host of modern painters, he had an instinct for pigment as pigment, knew how to extort from oil paint the special quality which belongs to that medium as to no other, and made himself one of the great exemplars of pure technique. You look at some of his portraits, at the great 'Mrs. Siddons,' for example, with appreciation, chiefly, of their broad merits of style. When you encounter a portrait like the bewitching 'Perdita Robinson,' of the Wallace collection, you think only of the shimmering dress, the blues that float upon the canvas like rose leaves on a silvery stream, the 'feathery' brushwork, which is as consummate in its way as the legerdemain of Hals.

"That has long been acknowledged to be the secret of 'The Mall.' Armstrong compares it with Wat-

teau's 'Embarkment for Cythera,' in the Louvre, and though he is not sure that Gainsborough ever saw one of the Frenchman's paintings he cannot resist the surmise that in 'The Mall' he 'consciously measured himself' with the foreign master. Such surmises are irrelevant. The important point is the simple one that in this picture, consciously or unconsciously, he very nearly matched Watteau on his own ground. We say 'very nearly' because, as a matter of fact, Gainsborough never quite achieved the Frenchman's mastery of form and he never discovered the secret of that honeyed, golden tone which, like his tints of rose, Watteau practically invented. But all the other enchantments have exerted their spell in 'The Mall,' the savor of light, gracious romance, the fascination of exquisite movement under murmurous foliage, the play of light and air and color in a gossamer web of *painted* charm. Old masterpieces brought from abroad to the United States have a pathetic way of disappearing from view into the private collections for which they are purchased. It is to be hoped that in this case there may be a public exhibition."

* * *

Another event of first rank is the exhibition, at the Ehrich Galleries, of paintings by Goya, El Greco and Zurbaran. Durand-Ruel are also showing some El Grecos, so it would seem that we should become well-posted upon the art of old Spain. Of the Ehrich exhibition the following criticism seems so complete that we republish it with our acknowledgment of indebtedness to Royal Cortissoz.

"It is an interesting group of paintings that has been brought together at the Ehrich galleries, illustrating three notable figures in Spanish art. El Greco is the earliest in the company. There are five examples of him, four of them disclosing the morbid intensity of his genius in the interpretation of religious themes. His saints are always touching. The sentiment with which he invested his pictures of them is always as sincere as it is bizarre. The two upright full length figures which are included here are also uncommonly brilliant in color. But we would give all his religious paintings in this particular exhibition for his 'Man in Armor.' It is a superb portrait of a profoundly Spanish type, beautifully painted and abounding in a certain dour psychological interest. Zurbaran, often, in devotional mood, as moving as El Greco, is in this instance similarly better studied in the treatment of a secular subject. The two large canvases of saints are good enough, but have little to say about his art in its richer estate. They are, for him, pot boilers. The double portrait, 'The Daughters of Juan de Roelas,' is a lovely thing, bearing the true stamp of his artistic character in its simple masses of russet color and in its sober style. The Goyas are of decidedly mixed

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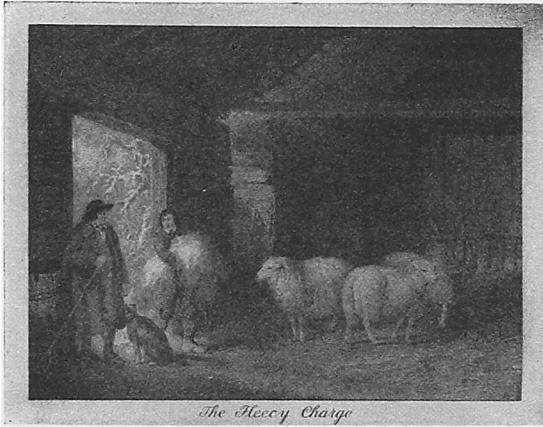
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value. Only one of them, the small 'Portrait of a Man,' gives to the full the charm of his bravura. After that we would place the amusing little sketch of the Duc d'Osuna."

* * *

Mrs. H. P. Whitney, who has made her studio one of the most useful public galleries in the city, after repeatedly placing it at the disposal of others, is now showing there some works of her own. The exhibition has just begun, and will continue until March 4. The Folsom gallery shows paintings by Miss D. Rice. At the Seligman gallery there are recent "portrait impressions" by Mr. Robert Reid. The Thumb Box gallery presents drawings, water colors and pastels by George Bellows, W. J. Glackens and others. The Tiffany Studios are making an exhibition illustrating all the forms of Mr. Louis Tiffany's activity in art. The Anderson galleries offer the collections of old Chinese rugs formed respectively by Mr. J. K. Mumford and Mr. Frederick Moore, which are to be sold on the afternoons of March 2, 3 and 4, and a collection of Colonial pewter, brass, copper, glass, etc., from another source, to be sold on February 25 and 26. The Keppel gallery is devoted just now to etching and lithographs by Whistler.

* * *

Every year the Metropolitan Museum gives us something really interesting to think about. This season it takes the shape of a special exhibition of Chinese pottery and sculpture, which is to be opened on March 6. It will contain unique treasures. American connoisseurs, Mr. Freer, Mr. Peters and others, have been extraordinarily active—and fortunate—in this field, and on occasions of the sort the museum has a happy way of securing precious loans. Another sale of pictures is to be announced. At the American Art Galleries, on Wednesday, March 1, there will open an exhibition of nearly five hundred paintings, old and modern, belonging to the estate of the late T. J. Blakeslee. They will be sold on the evenings of March 7, 8, 9 and 10. This will complete the dispersal of the Blakeslee stock. The Anderson galleries are occupied by a collection of old Chinese and Japanese brocades and tapestries, paintings, color prints, books and

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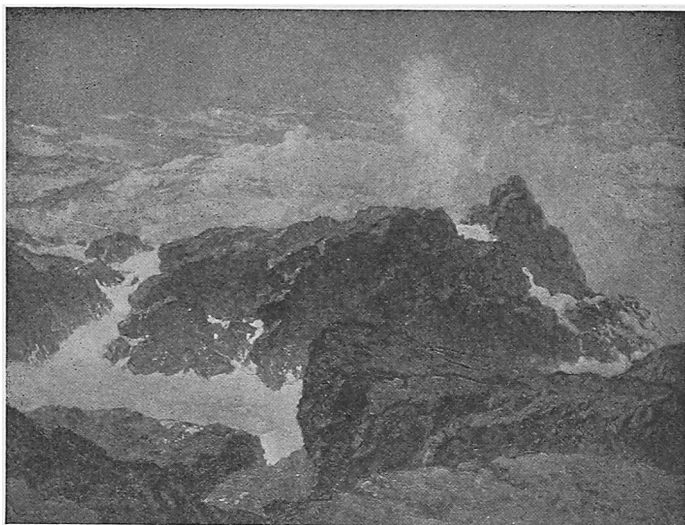
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Paintings by American Artists

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curios, belonging to Mr. Shotaro Sato, of Kyoto. It will be sold on March 9 and 10.

The Knoedler Galleries are exhibiting a series of feminine themes from classic myths by John Hemming Fry. They are a collection of nudes notable for good coloring and touches of poetic mysticism. On the walls of one of the smaller rooms are paintings by Louis Kronberg. For the most part they are of ballet girls, in which he appears to have always specialized. They are, every one of them, beautifully painted and there is a delightful fluffiness and lightness about the shimmering skirts. The figures are well posed and as graceful as their costumes permit them to be. "L'Habilleuse" is specially gracious in color and there is an alluring winsomeness and naturalness about the principal figure. "The Slipper" is one of the best painted of all. The light and dark, and the textures, are exquisite. Mr. Kronberg shows four canvases which inform us that he can do other things as well as ballet girls.

A large and important collection of etchings and lithographs by Whistler is now on view at the Keppel gallery. It contains beautiful impressions of many of the finest plates. The show brings home to the beholder with great force the genius of the artist and his wonderful mastery of his medium.

Among the lithographs "Early Morning, Battersea," is conspicuous. It has an astounding delicacy and the effect almost of a wash drawing. "Gabled Roofs, Vitre," is one of Whistler's superb drawings of houses, being to his lithographs what "The Unsafe Tenement" is to his etchings. "La Robe Rouge," which is really a portrait of Mrs. Whistler, is noteworthy on account of its strong suggestion of color. It is a marvel how he has been able to produce this effect with black and white alone. One of the most beautiful of his lithographs is "The Butcher's Dog," which he himself held in high esteem. It shows the exterior of a butcher's shop with a dog seated before the window; it is drawn in his most mas-

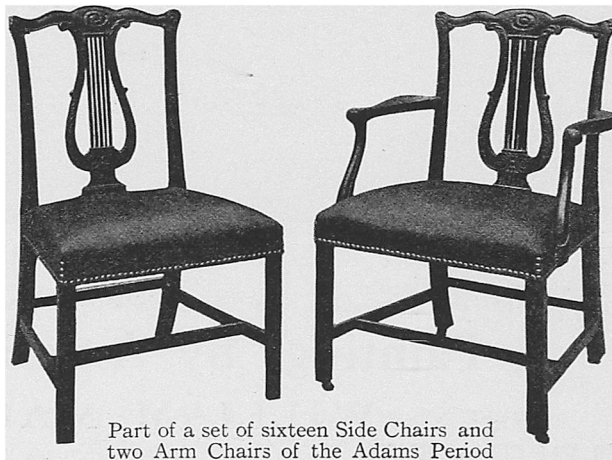
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terly manner. By far the larger part of the lithographs included in the show are from the collection of T. R. Way, who was Whistler's friend and printer. This helps to account for their very high quality.

There are more etchings than lithographs shown. "The Unsafe Tenement" is one of the most brilliant in its strength of line and in its massing of light and dark. It reminds one a bit of some of the work of Dutch artists. "La Vieille aux Loques" is one of those etchings in which Whistler employed his favorite methods of a picture within a picture. The doorway forms a frame for the figure of the old ragpicker. A remarkably rich impression of "The Kitchen" is shown. The same method of framing the subject in a doorway is employed, and Whistler's mastery of luminous shadow is nowhere more apparent. The two finest prints are the "Portrait of Becquet" and the "Nocturne." The former is surely one of the greatest portrait etchings from the hand of any master; it ranks with the finest of Rem-

brandt's. The print of the "Nocturne" is spectacular. It is the finest known impression of this marvellous plate. On the back of it Whistler has written "selected proof" and signed it again with the butterfly. Never has any one conveyed through the medium of etchings so much magic.

Paul Manship's exhibition of his bewilderingly decorative sculptures has drawn both effusive and grudging praise from the critical and hypercritical Cortissoz, who, while unable to withstand the lure of their undeniable loveliness, nevertheless gives an incisive and searching analysis of their charm. He says:

"It is a complex order of beauty that his art embodies. To say that it embraces grace of form, that in this matter of form he depends more upon purity of line than upon subtlety of surface, that he has the ingenuity of a Renaissance goldsmith in the application of ornament, that his designs have a bewitchingly decorative quality and that the whole fabric of his work is animated by a positively realistic feeling for nature, for movement—to say all this is decidedly to say a good deal.

"And yet it leaves the full tale untold. For the

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rounding out of that we have to turn to an element not plastic, specifically, but broadly personal; we turn to a state of mind. If Mr. Manship was not so clearly possessed of an instinct for his craft we should be inclined to describe him as a kind of literary man in art, a master of all the cultures, an eclectic to whom the schools have given precisely the sort of inspiration commended by Stevenson to his 'sedulous ape.' Just as an Austin Dobson, say, can take the measure of Pope and do with it what he will, so can Mr. Manship seize the idiom of another age and fairly abash us by his use of it. Consider, for example, the 'Sun Dial,' which is one of the most charming things in the show, and, by the same token, one of those which most frankly confess their exotic derivation. Its prototypes are easily discoverable in Indian art. Mr. Havell's book on that subject illustrates a Nepalese Bodhisattva, a copper-gilt statuette in the art gallery at Calcutta, which will take us very close to the source of Mr. Manship's inspiration. Now we find it impossible to think of the one sculpture existing in the absence of the other; yet we delight in the later work, it is so lovely in itself—and it is executed with such superb skill.

"To Mr. Manship's skill and to his taste we are always coming back. Let us accept once for all his intense sophistication, his desire for things Greek, things Egyptian, things Roman, things Renaissance, and with it his way of making us feel that we are

not in the workshop of a modern artist, but in some European museum of old bronzes."

One might, however, be allowed to take issue with the critic for, is it not, after all, as natural and as sincere for the modern artist, broadly cultured and much traveled, to create from his knowledge and erudition as it was for the older craftsmen who knew no time or country than their own to create from their ignorance and limitations? Surely a man may be a scholar and a cosmopolitan in art as well as in letters and classics or other references are equally allowable in either case.

* * *

During the month of February, the Macbeth Gallery held its annual exhibition of Thirty Paintings by Thirty Artists. A splendid example of the work of D. W. Tryon, recently purchased by this gallery direct from Mr. Tryon, and not previously shown in New York, was one of the most noticed canvases. Elliott Daingerfield and F. Ballard Williams showed new pictures that rank with their best.

Charles Melville Dewey, who should be

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accorded far wider recognition than he has yet received, had a canvas, *The Coppice*, that deserves high praise. Charles W. Hawthorne was represented by *The Open Window*, which recently hung in the Chicago Art Institute exhibition.

Other men represented were Louis Betts, Emil Carlsen, Arthur B. Davies, Charles H. Davis, Paul Dougherty, Daniel Garber, Child Hassam, Robert Henri and Richard E. Miller.

In March this gallery will have a group of fifteen pictures by five artists, three of each. The group idea has been carefully developed for many years by Mr. Macbeth, and the crowds at each exhibition attest the popularity of the plan. The gallery reports that sales this winter, particularly to western collectors, are extremely gratifying.

* * *

The thirteenth of this month will witness the opening of *The Forum Exhibition of Modern American Painters* at *The Anderson Galleries*. The exhibition will be the largest of its kind ever held in this country, and the circumstances under which it is presented are sufficiently unique to make it of unusual interest and importance. The committee which has fathered the exhibition and which has selected all of the paintings that are to be displayed, is composed of men of divergent tastes, but each of them holds an important and influential position in the world of art. They are Mr. Willard Huntington Wright, Dr. Christian Brinton, Mr. Alfred Stieglitz, Dr. John Weichsel, Mr. W. H. de B. Nelson and Mr. Robert Henri.

The Forum exhibition is not a commercial undertaking, and the members have no interest in it other than a philanthropic one. The purpose of the show is to put before the American public in a large and complete manner the very best examples of the more modern American art; to stimulate interest in the really good native work of the movement; to present for the first time a comprehensive, critical selection of the serious paintings now being shown in isolated groups; to turn public attention for the moment from modern European art and concentrate it on the excellent work being done in America; and by

guaranteeing, as it were, the authenticity and conscientiousness of the paintings shown, to make the buyer who is interested in the more modern manifestations in painting feel secure in purchasing pictures. There will be two hundred paintings by about twenty artists; and each of these paintings will represent a critical selection by the members of the committee.

Because of the many charlatans who have allied themselves with the modern movement and have done much to make the public regard all the newer manifestations as worthless or "crazy," and because of the widespread unfamiliarity on the part of picture buyers with the recent developments in painting, The Forum Committee hope to stimulate intelligent sales by thus putting forth a large collection of work which they agree—from their wide-separated viewpoints—is deserving and serious.

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